Skyrocket your SAP® Integration Strategy:
How packaged integrations accelerate delivery

enosix

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According to Gartner: "By 2023, use of packaged integration processes will grow from less than 30% in 2020 to above 65% of new integration projects."[1]

What are PIPs?

PIPs are software applications or tools designed to automate and standardize everyday business processes. They address common and repeatable integration use cases across SaaS and software applications, APIs, databases, data lake and data warehousing platforms, business processes, and B2B assets.

You may find PIPs labeled as accelerators, recipes, integration bundles, or templates. Regardless of their name, though, PIPs serve the same purpose: They offer reusable integration assets that ensure you won't have to develop integration processes from scratch.

PIPs are becoming popular among businesses that lack IT staff capable of handling complex integration requirements (or who would rather spend their teams' time on other things).

How do PIPs work?

Most PIPs are tied to a specific integration platform. They have appropriate runtime infrastructure created by a platform provider or third parties that provide PIP maintenance and support.

Integration platform providers often offer a PIP marketplace. Here, businesses can access PIPs free of charge and share them as private or public assets.

There are also vendors, such as enosix, who offer standalone PIP solutions that can be used across a variety of platforms.

Introduction

Digital transformation is fundamentally changing the way businesses operate. As we increasingly leverage digital technologies to transform operations, we are discovering new ways to improve the customer and employee experience. But for companies running ERP systems, every new platform deployed means another integration to the ERP that needs to be built. In order to get the maximum value out of your digital transformation initiatives, you need a way to produce finished integrations with speed and agility. Packaged Integration Processes (PIPs) may be the missing piece to enable your digital strategy.

When used in combination with the right business design approach, PIPs can empower your company to create new business models and ecosystems, optimize the customer experience and business operations, and continuously drive digital transformation. Yet, PIPs are not ideal for every digital transformation scenario, and the solutions from different vendors may have varying strengths and weaknesses.

1. Gartner, Accelerate Your Integration Delivery by Using Packaged Integration Processes, November 2020, https://www.gartner.com/document/3993201

5 Benefits of PIPs

There are many reasons businesses choose PIPs as a digital integration solution:

1. Fast time to value

PIPs can help reduce the time required to deploy new integration processes compared to implementing the same processes from the ground up on an integration platform, resulting in faster time to value.

2. Self-service integration

Employees across multiple lines of business — regardless of IT skills — can use PIPs. They can leverage PIPs to configure and customize integrations as they choose, so the business's integration specialists can focus exclusively on complex integrations.

3. PIPs are industry-proven

Developers build PIPs based on a comprehensive understanding of integration requirements between critical business systems (SAP, Salesforce, etc.). They leverage proven best practices to create PIPs that connect and translate objects between these systems without hampering the end-user experience.

4. Lifecycle and version control

Some PIP providers offer full support, maintenance, and lifecycle management. This means businesses won't have to worry about updating the underlying integration platforms or integration endpoints associated with their PIPs.

5. Quick deployment

Businesses with limited IT staff are usually ill-equipped to handle complex integrations. Now, these companies can leverage PIPs to deploy integrations with minimal time and resource investments.

4 factors to consider before you implement PIPs

The benefits of PIPs are significant. However, not every PIP delivers the same results for every business. It is paramount to learn as much as possible about PIPs before you count on them as part of your digital transformation efforts. To determine if a PIP is right for your business, it is important to consider the following factors:

1. Integration strategy

Develop an integration strategy that outlines integration changes and challenges. This strategy should enable you to assess the strategic role of integrations in your business and how they can help your company achieve its digital transformation goals.

2. Integration scenarios

Review hybrid, Internet of Things (IoT), and other integration scenarios. This can help you ensure you are selecting platforms that will cover the full breadth of your requirements.

3. Integration governance

Centralize governance to manage integration risks. Governance should be adapted by project and support self-service and agile integrations.

4. Integration outsourcing

Ensure staff is available to support your integrations. If necessary, partner with an integration solutions specialist that can develop, deploy, maintain, and support your integrations.

Risks of using PIPs

Along with evaluating the aforementioned factors, it helps to understand the risks of PIPs. That way, you can make an informed decision about whether PIPs will support your digital transformation needs and work to mitigate those risks during vendor selection and implementation. Common risks of leveraging PIPs include:

1. PIPs are not plug-and-play

Highly specialized business processes require custom integrations capable of handling specific integration logic or processing rules. Most PIPs are partially complete solutions that require customization to accommodate SAP and other complex systems. Depending on the vendor, that customization may be almost as much effort as building the whole integration would have been. **enosix has pre-built Rapid Integration Objects that cover the most common queries and transactions in SAP 80-100% out of the box, with the ability to easily handle custom fields, tables, and functionality.**

2. PIPs may not be flexible enough for all integration scenarios

PIPs often have static configurations and workflows, which limit your ability to use them in a wide range of integration scenarios. For instance, custom record types can often not be built with PIPs, since the process components cannot be reused across implementations. To handle this scenario, use an integration platform or code-based integration to develop a custom integration process. **With enosix, your custom workflows in SAP are used in place – so modifying them in the future or using in different scenarios is the exact same effort you have today – the integration layer does not add additional reconfiguration work. So you can put in place the integration layer your business requires and reuse it across front-end applications without fear of adding extra work or complexity.**

3. PIPs may create vendor lock-in

Because PIPs are often supplied by the integration platform-as-a-service (iPaaS) vendor, they typically only work on that platform. So changing iPaaS vendors (or whichever vendor is supplying the PIP) means starting over with the integration components. **By contrast, enosix's packaged SAP integration platform supplies an easy-to-use REST API that can then be connected to any iPaaS, ETL tool, or directly to your front-end systems.**

PIPs require careful evaluation, but as long as you are aware of these risks in your project planning, the benefits in performance, flexibility, and deployment effort can be enormous.

PIP Recommendations

To implement PIPs, you should:

Evaluate your business application integration processes in your backlog. Where are the bottlenecks where you can achieve the best ROI by outsourcing the integration?

Offer PIPs to a broader audience. Provide ad hoc and citizen integrators with approved PIPs that can be deployed on their own.

Conduct a proof of concept (POC). Use a POC test to assess your ability to implement PIPs and see the return.

How does enosix's packaged integration for SAP ERP work?

The enosix platform is designed to tightly integrate with your SAP ERP system – including all of your customizations. Our framework installs directly in SAP ECC or S/4HANA and can expose a REST API through our Connect product. Our API can be learned by any front-end developer in a few hours and used to complete your integration projects in 70-90% less time than trying to interface directly with SAP – and even relative to the PIPs provided by many other vendors for SAP ERP integration.

And because nearly every modern iPaaS and middleware solution can interface with REST, the enosix platform makes it easy to swap out your API management or other tools without changing your front-end applications or redoing your SAP integration.
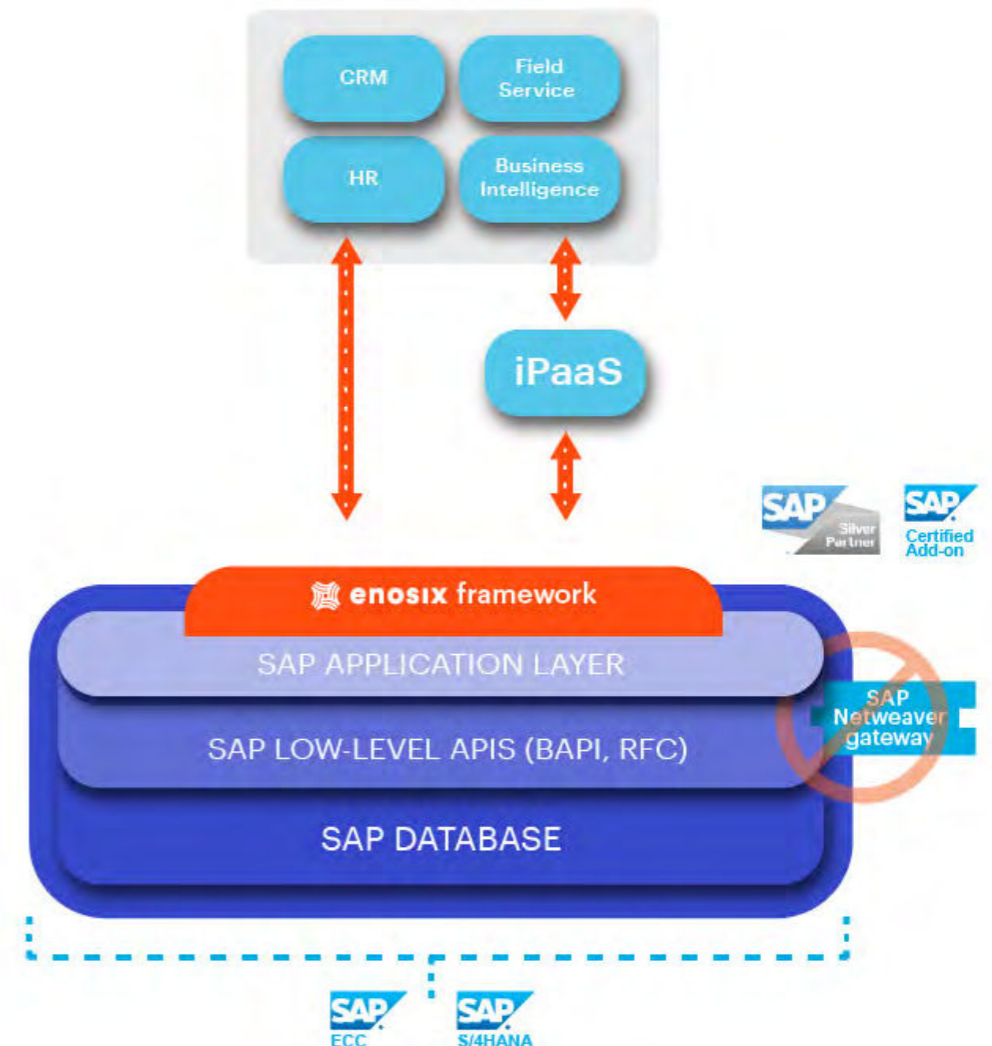
Conclusion

Digital transformation is a top priority for many businesses, and companies are exploring ways to accelerate their digital transformation efforts. With PIPs, businesses can empower technical and non-technical end-users to implement agile, secure processes across their companies. These users can then leverage these processes to speed up digital transformation projects and ensure the business can deliver customer experiences that distinguish their brands from industry rivals.

At enosix, we encourage you to consider PIPs as you explore digital transformation opportunities, and would love to assist with all your SAP ERP integration needs.

To learn more, please visit www.enosix.com.